NOTE OF THE OFFICIATING FIRST MEMBER OF COUNCIL (MR. P. RAGHAVENDRA RAO) ON THE PROPOSED RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

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The question of the re-organization of the Public Works Department to meet the present day requirements has received my careful consideration and I proceed to note below my views on it.

To my mind the three main issues for primary consideration are (1) the separation, or otherwise, of the Chief Engineership from the Secretaryship to the Government in the Public Works Department, (2) unified control or multiple control and (3) retention, or otherwise, of the Circles of Superintendence: For the sake of convenience, I shall deal with them seriatim.

1. From a theoretical point of view, the solution to the problem is only one, and, that is, that the Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department should not also be the Chief Engineer. The principle underlying this is well understood and realised. It is obvious on the face of it that it is undesirable that an officer who exercises administrative control should also have executive functions to perform. This principle has been recognised generally, and so far as the P.W.D., administration is concerned, it

it has received special mention in the report of the Commission which dealt with the re-organization of the Public Works Department in British India. In spite of the enunciation of this principle the Secretaryship to Government in the Public Works Department is in all British Indian Provinces combined with the Chief Engineership and there has been no separation. It would be interesting to know why this continues to be the case. Even admitting that a separation of these two functions is desirable in the interests of efficiency and proper administration, the next question which comes up for solution is by whom the Secretaryship is to be held, whether by a technical officer or an officer of the general service? If the former, what should be his rank and status? It seems to me that it would be obviously unfair to the Chief Engineer as the Head of the Public Works Department, if the Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department was an officer of a junior rank such as an Executive Engineer or even a Superintending Engineer. Though it may not be openly admitted, yet, it would be a hard fact that this officer of junior rank would be called upon to sit in judgment in technical matters over one very much his senior in service and experience, though perhaps not in academic qualifications. It might be argued that in technical matters he would not be allowed this opportunity, but, I venture to think, that this is an untenable position and it would serve no useful purpose if his technical knowledge was not made use of.

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If we consider the alternative of having as Secretary, Public Works Department, an officer of the same service and experience as Chief Engineer, it will at once strike one that there is no justification for incurring this expenditure on two such highly paid officers, particularly in a small and compact area like our own State. I am of opinion that it will not be justifiable to have two senior officers in the Public Works Department, one as Chief Engineer and the other as Secretary, Public Works Department. Considering next the idea of having an officer of the general service as Secretary, Public Works Department, it will be seen that the control which he can exercise over the Chief Engineer will be of a purely administrative, as distinguished from a technical nature. What useful purpose will be served by having a fifth wheel of this type in the coach is not clear to understand. In this case, it will be absolutely necessary for the Chief Engineer to command the implicit confidence of Government in all technical matters and for the Government to rely entirely upon his advice. The arrangement of having the Chief Engineer as Secretary, Public Works Department, fulfils the same purpose and why and where a change is indicated, it is not easy to perceive. Unless the Secretary, Public Works Department, is an officer of similar status and rank as the Chief Engineer, but for which there is no justification in Mysore as matters stand at present, the Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department, can only be an officer of the general service. While I have no objection to the experiment being tried, still I must frankly say that I am not convinced of the advisability of

of trying it.

2. Though it may appear that at present the system of unified control has not been conducive to efficiency or despatch of work, yet it is very doubtful if a multiplicity of control will be the panacea for the evil. In a State of an area of only 30,000 Square Miles and compact as our State happens to be, there ought not to be any difficulty in one Chief Engineer being able to control all branches of the Public Works Department. It may be argued that if there are separate Chief Engineers for the various branches it will lead to greater efficiency, expeditious disposal of references and satisfactory and speedy execution of works. This will however entail a division of labour in the Districts which may or may not prove conducive to smooth working or to economy. For instance the two, or more, Chief Engineers and the Executive Engineers under them may probably be doing the same journeys, though each in connection with his own branch of work. It is very doubtful also if this is a desirable system from the point of view of Government even. It seems to me that it will be more convenient to deal with one Chief Engineer than with more than one. With a multiplicity of heads there is sure to be playing at cross purpose and difficulties in the transfer of officers and men from branch to branch. Furthermore, it will be impracticable to have two or more Chief Engineers on high salaries, and, I fear, it will take away from the prestige which attaches itself to the designation of Chief Engineer, if, on account of

of the division of work the emoluments pertaining thereto are also reduced. All factors considered, I am of opinion that there is not much to be gained by a multiplicity of control though it may commend itself as a novelty.

N.B. Just as matters stand at present, it seems to me that (1) the separation of the Secretaryship from the Public Works Department and (2) a multiplicity of Chief Engineers are systems which are contraindicated. I say this with special reference to the Krishnarajasagara Scheme. It is a very important and delicate matter and unless there is one senior and experienced officer who is both Chief Engineer and Secretary to Government, I am afraid it will be very difficult to carry on the work that still remains to be done, and that is not little. At least for the next few years this will be a contingency which will have to be reckoned with.

3. As regards the Circles of Superintendence, it seems to me that if the Chief Engineer is relieved of the Secretaryship or there is more than one Chief Engineer, there will be no necessity to have any Circles of Superintendence. But even under the present system, where there is only one Chief Engineer who is also Secretary to Government, the Circles of Superintendence can, I think, be done away with, if care is taken in the selection of the Deputy Chief Engineer and the Executive Engineers. As matters stand at present, Superintending Engineers do only transmission work and undertake little or no responsibility, as the actual work is done by the Executive Engineer, while the final responsibility rests only with the Chief Engineer. The

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The Superintending Engineers do not, in my opinion, fulfil any useful purpose in the economy of the Public Works Department of our State as matters stand. If they are to serve any useful purpose at all, they must be granted higher powers, but, the necessity for this is not imminent. Considering the advantages as well as the disadvantages, it may be safely said that not much risk will be run if the Circles of Superintendence are done away with.

4. The average percentage of establishment to expenditure in the Public Works Department is anywhere between 20 and 25 per cent in British Indian Provinces, but, if 30 lakhs is taken as the average annual expenditure in the Public Works Department in Mysore State, the expenditure on establishment works to 6 lakhs which is only a fifth or 20 per cent. It does not therefore appear that the expenditure on establishment here is high at all. Though, owing to the present financial stringency, the expenditure on the Public Works Department has to be kept low, yet, the case will have to be based on what the average normal expenditure is likely to be. If this is taken at 30 lakhs, an establishment of 6 lakhs is not at all unreasonable. But if a saving can be effected in this without sacrifice of efficiency of any kind, it will certainly be an object worth achieving.

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